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oetry
A Magazine of Verse

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THE CONVERSATION

Man:



YOU knew then—starting, let us say, with
ether—
You would become electrons? out of whirling
Would rise to atoms? then as an atom resting,
Till through Yourself in other atoms moving,
And by the fine affinity of power,
Atom with atom massed, You would go on,
Over the crest of visible forms transformed,
Would be a molecule, a little system
Wherein the atoms move like suns and planets
With satellites, electrons? So, as worlds build
From star-dust, as electron to electron,
The same attraction drawing, molecules
Would wed and pass over the crest again
Of visible forms, lying content as crystals,
Or colloids: ready now to use the gleam

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Of life? As it were, I see You with a match,
As one in darkness lights a candle, and one
Sees not his friend's form in the shadowed room
Until the candle's lighted—even his form
Is darkened by the new-made light, he stands
So near it! Well, I add to all I've asked
Whether You knew the cell born through the glint
Of that same lighted match could never rest—
Even as electrons rest not—but would surge
Over the crest of visible forms, become,
Beneath our feet, life hidden from the eye,
However aided—as above our heads,
Over the Milky Way, great systems whirl
Beyond the telescope!—become bacilli,
Amœba, star-fish, swimming things; on land
The serpent, and then birds, and beasts of prey,
The tiger (You in the tiger), on and on,
Surging above the crest of visible forms
Until the ape came?—oh, what ages they are—
But still creation flies on wings of light!—
Then to the man who roamed the frozen fields,
Neither man nor ape?—we found his jaw, You know,
At Heidelberg, in a sand-pit. On and on
Till Babylon was builded, and arose
Jerusalem and Memphis, Athens, Rome,
Venice and Florence, Paris, London, Berlin,
New York, Chicago—did You know, I ask,
All this would come of You in ether moving?

The Conversation

A Voice:

I knew.

Man:

You knew that man was born to be destroyed ;
That as an atom perfect, whole, at ease,
Drawn to some other atom, is broken, changed,
And rises over the crest of visible things
To something else—that man must pass as well
Through equal transformation. And You knew
The unutterable things of man's life: from the first
You saw his racked Deucalion soul, that looks
Backward on life that rises where he rose—
Out of the stones. You saw him looking forward
Over the purple mists that hide the gulf.
Ere the green cell rose, even in the green cell,
You saw the sequences of thought: You saw
That one would say, "All's matter," and another,
"All's mind;" and man's mind, which reflects the image,
Could not envision it; that even worship
Of what You are would be confused by cries
From India or Palestine; that love
Which sees itself beginning in the seeds,
That fly to seek and wed each other, maims
The soul at the last in loss of child or friend,
Father or mother. And You knew that sex,
Ranging from plants through beasts and up to us,
Had ties of filth—and out of them would rise

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Diverse philosophies to tear the world.
You knew, when the green cell arose, that even
The You which formed it, moving on, would bring
Races and breeds, madmen, tyrants, slaves,
The idiot child, the murderer, the insane—
All springing from the action of one law.
You knew the enmity that lies between
The lives of micro-beings and our own. You knew
How man would rise to vision of himself,
Immortal only in the race's life;
And past the atom and the first glint of life,
Saw him with soul enraptured, yet o'ershadowed
Amid self-consciousness!

A Voice:

I knew.
But this your fault: you see Me as apart,
Over, removed, at enmity with you.
You are in Me, and of Me, even at one
With Me. But there's your soul—your soul may be
The germinal cell of vaster evolution!
Why try to tell you? If I gave a cell
Voice to inquire, and it should ask you this:
“After me what—a stalk, a flower, life
That swims or crawls?” And if I gave to you
Wisdom to say: “You shall become a reed
By the water's edge”—how could the cell foresee
What the reed is, bending beneath the wind

The Conversation

When the lake ripples and the skies are blue
As larkspur? Therefore I, who moved in darkness,
Becoming light in suns and light in souls,
And mind with thought—for what is thought but light
Sprung from the clash of ether?—I am with you.
And if beyond this stable state that stands
For your life here (as cells are whole and balanced
Till the inner urge bring union, then a breaking,
And building up to higher life) there is
No memory of this world nor of your thought,
Nor sense of life on this world lived and borne;
Or whether you remember, know yourself
As one who lived here, suffered here, aspired—
What does it matter? You cannot be lost,
As I am lost not. Therefore be at peace.
And from the laws whose orbits cross and run
To seeming tangles, find the law through which
Your soul shall be perfected, till it draw—
As the green cell the sunlight draws, and turns
Its chemical effulgence into life—
My inner splendor. All the rest is mine
In infinite time. For if I should unroll
The parchment of the future, it were vain—
You could not read it.